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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1908.

CITIZENS' RIGHTS.

It has been intimated from several sources that President Roosevelt will finally make concessions to the labor unions in the case of W. A. Miller, foreman in the Government Printing Office, whose discharge was demanded because he has been expelled from the bookbinders' union. But the Baltimore Sun's Washington correspondent says that while Miller may be discharged, it will be on charges other than those connected with his relations with the union, and the President in making the announcement will distinctly state the reasons, and will reiterate the declaration that there can be no discrimination in the government service against either union or non-union men.

The President has stated the principle and stated it correctly, and if he should depart one jot or one tittle therefrom he would lose the respect of the nation, the respect of fair-minded workmen as well as of all other citizens. This question involves the most sacred right of the American citizen, the right to use his muscle and brain in any honorable occupation which he may select without discrimination against him, because of his affiliation or non-affiliation with any set or clique or organization whatsoever. If the government does not recognize this right it is false to its fundamental law, and if the President, as the executive officer of the government, should fail to uphold the law which protects every citizen in this right, he would be false to his trust and an object of contempt. It is not for the President to say whether or not an employee of the government shall belong to a labor union. It is his business to give the same opportunity to all classes of citizens, and when a man has shown himself to be competent to do the government's work it would be a public outrage for the President or any officer of government to reject him because of his affiliation or non-affiliation with a labor union. If an individual or if a private corporation elects to employ union labor only or non-union labor only, it is the right of such individual or such corporation to do so, and nobody has the right to interfere. The moral question involved, if there be any, or the question of expediency, is for the employer to decide according to his own notion. But the government occupies a very different position. The government is the custodian of the rights of the people, and it must not put itself in the position of denying any man the right to work for the government because he happens to be a union man or a non-union man.

President Roosevelt has already declared the doctrine, and correctly declared it. We repeat, and we have no idea that he will reverse his decision.

THE WORLD GROWS BETTER.

In an address before the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches, now in session at Atlantic City, Mr. Carroll D. Wright, United States Commissioner of Labor, delivered an interesting address on the subject, "Some Evidence of Growth of Practical Religion."

Mr. Wright took the optimistic view and controverted the statements of those who say that there is a decadence of the true religious spirit. He declared that the public conscience to-day was more acute, more sensitive, than at any time in the history of mankind, and we quite agree with him. Never before was there so universal a demand for justice to all, for the maintenance of individual rights, for morality in high places, for pure politics and honest government. Never before in the history of the world was so much done for popular education, for the care of paupers, the feeble-minded and insane persons, for public health and cleanliness, for the amelioration of suffering, and for the general uplift of humanity. There are so many evidences of this on every hand that it would be a waste of time to go into specifications.

Mr. Wright says further evidence of the truth of his assertion in the question of crime. "I think," said he, "that it is the general belief that crime is largely on the increase," and he admitted that the statistics of crime support this contention. But he pointed out that those who so believe do not stop to distinguish between what is crime to-day and what was crime forty or fifty years ago, nor do they stop to consider the question as to the more perfect statistics of to-day brought into comparison with the imperfect and crude statistics of half a century ago. "The statistics," he went on, "comprehend not only the persistent crimes, but those crimes which have been established by legislative enactment, and more especially so within the last five years. If we look beneath the figures we shall find that the crimes that have

remained constantly so under the criminal code during the last fifty years have not only not increased, but have relatively decreased, and this is the true test."

Another evidence of a better order of things, as pointed out by him, is the manner in which we now deal with criminals, the accepted theory being that the criminal must be reformed, and during his confinement intelligent and charitable efforts must be made to reform him and turn him out a better man. Nor is this work left entirely to the government, but in many States there are voluntary associations composed of men and women, who make it their business to co-operate with the government in its conduct of prisons, with a view to improving the moral condition of the convicts. This work is growing all the time, and it has made notable progress during the past few years in the State of Virginia. Penology is rapidly becoming a sort of religious science.

Finally, Mr. Wright said that the treatment of the labor question offered one of the strongest evidences of the growth of a religious spirit. "The employer recognizes this in large degree—not universally, not in every establishment, but in increasing numbers and in increasing degree. The best men are willing to grant to other men what they claim for themselves, and this is one of the highest conceptions of religious action. The moment one man recognizes the rights of another he is far on the way to the solution of the difficulties which perplex him."

"That is a true saying. The man who makes it the rule of his life to respect the rights and feelings of his fellows in the true spirit of his Maker is following closely along the lines of the Golden Rule, and is not far from the kingdom of Heaven."

INDIFFERENT VOTERS.

It is said that Canada, as well as the United States, is troubled by the indifferent voter, and is trying to devise a way to bring him to the polls. To that end, we are told, the Dominion Election Committee, of Ottawa, has decided to recommend to the House a law whereby any qualified voter failing to cast his ballot shall be deprived of the right to do so at the next general election.

This is an exceedingly difficult question to deal with. Voting is a privilege, and therefore compulsory voting is a contradiction. It is hard to see how the government can consistently compel a sovereign citizen to exercise a privilege which it confers upon him. To undertake to compel a man to vote is very much like compelling him to exercise his privilege to walk in the public parks. But the government may very properly withdraw the voting privilege, either temporarily or permanently, from a citizen who puts such a low estimate upon it that he will not take the trouble to exercise it upon occasion. Therefore, the proposed law in Canada seems to be entirely reasonable. It is quite certain that something ought to be done in the United States to stimulate the indifferent voter to action. The primary election held in the city of Richmond on Tuesday last furnished additional proof that there are many indifferent voters in Richmond, and the strange part of it is that the majority of these are men whose interests demand that they should take an active part in public affairs. Very often they are men who complain bitterly of bad laws and a poor government service, yet they themselves do nothing whatever to improve the situation. They put the blame upon others, when, in fact, the blame lies in great part at their own doors. If all men upon whom the voting privilege has been conferred would exercise that privilege as the law contemplates, if they would take an active interest in local and State and national politics, if they would exert themselves to bring out good candidates, and then to elect them, we should soon have a very marked improvement in the laws of the land and in the public service.

LOUISIANA PRIMARY.

The primary election plan prepared by a subcommittee of the State Committee, of Louisiana, provides for an election on December 15th, when State officers and a United States Senator will be nominated.

The primary will be held in every parish in the State, and every ward in New Orleans, and in addition to nominating the public officers before named, each parish and each ward in New Orleans, will elect one member of the State Central Committee. The voting will be by secret ballot, and the polls will be opened at 8 A. M. and closed at 8 P. M. Voters must be white Democrats, lawfully registered.

If any one offering to vote be challenged, he will not be permitted to cast his ballot until he has been sworn and has declared that at the last State or congressional election in which he participated he voted for the Democratic candidate, and that at the next regular election to be held according to law he will vote "for the Democratic candidate."

The American soldier, we believe, is better paid and better treated than any other soldier in the world. He will be content with nothing less—and is not always content with that. Yet it strikes us that it would pay the United States to be more careful in recruiting. As far as possible, inquiry ought to be made into the antecedents of men asking to enlist. Those who are going into the army because they have suffered from a recent disappointment, or when they are just coming off spree, are no always to be trusted to serve out their terms fully. Some men possibly may enlist to procure a chance to go to the Philippines, but many others have a horror of being sent there. Of that we are convinced, but the government needs soldiers there from this country until the time comes when most of the military duty to be done there may be safely entrusted to native troops.

When that time arrives, perhaps there will be fewer desertions from the army. We suppose, too, that when the country is prosperous, as it is now, it is harder to get men for the army, and keep them there than it is when times are hard and employment is difficult to get.

The chairman of the State Committee is to make up a budget of probable elec-

tion expenses, and is to apportion the same as equitably as possible among the candidates for the several offices.

The plan of election of which the foregoing is a synopsis will be submitted by the subcommittee to the full State Committee on October 14th. It is expected that it will be adopted without any material changes.

ARMY MATTERS.

The new army law, whose advent marked the retirement of Nelson A. Miles, in effect abolished the office of lieutenant-general. A general staff was created instead, of which General S. M. B. Young is chief. He does most of the work that Miles used to do, and also some of that which is commonly supposed to pertain to the office of Secretary of War. And just there already some questions have arisen. The accounting officers of the government doubt Young's right to order certain payments to be made, and we conjecture that the opinion of the law officers of the department will have to be taken to decide who is right and who is wrong; that is to say whether the secretary or the chief of staff should issue "commands" for the payment of mileage and other claims. It does not appear that General Young is bull-headed in the matter, but the law is not as clear as it should be, and seems susceptible of two constructions.

One of the recent decisions of the general staff is that hereafter that corps shall furnish the officers who are to serve as military attaches to our embassies. This has created a great stir—not to say opposition and commotion. Those places are highly desirable and are much sought after. If we may be permitted to use an expression that is scarcely allowable in strict military parlance. They are desirable from the standpoint of a society man and also from that of the ardent student who wishes to have the opportunity which those places afford to improve himself in his profession for studying the methods of warfare.

Whether the old plan of packing these details is better than the new, or vice versa, we do not know, but certain it is that many appointments that have been made in the past have been sharply criticised. Favoritism is said to have ruled too often—wealth and social standing weighing much in the selection of officers for that service. Under the new rule, which goes into effect in about three months, many well known and able officers will be relieved from duty abroad and returned to their commands.

General Arthur, commanding the Department of California, reports that nearly twenty per centum of the enlisted men in that department deserted during the fiscal year. Of this number 94 were from the permanent garrisons in the departments, representing approximately 18.42 per cent. of the main strength thereof for the year. The remaining 430 were recruits and soldiers passing to and from the Philippines. General McArthur does not understand why so many men resorted to this violent method of "separating" from the service, and he says that "if the depressing result could in any way be attributed to American methods it would certainly justify the deepest solicitude on the part of all concerned in the military administration of the nation."

The general further says: "As a matter of fact, the American soldier is so well provided for in respect to all his material necessities, and his personal rights are so carefully safeguarded in respect to all matters of discipline, that a conclusion arises spontaneously in the minds of experienced investigators to the effect that desertion to a large extent is incidental to human nature rather than an expression of specific defects in military system."

As a matter of fact many men enlist in the army simply because they are out of employment, and because they are tired of fighting the battle for bread in avenues of trade or commerce that are so crowded as to offer them no inducements to continue the struggle there. But in the course of a year or so they find of the army and long to enter business life again. They see—or think they see—openings on every side, and they fret and fume until a time comes when they are desperate enough to desert. If they are tyrannized over—or imagine that they are—by some officer or "non com" so much the sooner will they make up their minds to desert, and off they go on the first "provisional."

The general intimates that there probably would be fewer deserters if public opinion were more pronounced than it is against the crime, and doubtless he is right. As it is, desertion in time of peace is not regarded by the general public as a very heinous offense. There are hundreds of respectable citizens in the West and middle West who went out there in the army, deserted and entered into business and "lived happily ever afterwards." In some cases their offenses are not known in the communities where they live; in other cases, their offenses are known and freely condoned.

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The omission of the name of McClellan by the President and the Governor of New Jersey has been counterbalanced by the newspapers. If there was any intention to ignore "Little Mac," we do not like to believe there was, it is perceived to be a humbug. He is receiving "honorable mention" from thousands of public men, veterans, editors, etc., and it seems that he has by no means passed out of the memory of the people.

The good people of Greensboro, and of all North Carolina, as for that matter, are making grand preparations for the great reunion of North Carolinians that is to take place in that city next month. The wanderers from the good old State will be returning from every quarter of the globe, and the reception that awaits them will be something worthy of the famous hospitality of the people of Greensboro and of North Carolina. The mammoth old time barbecue on the old Guilford courthouse battleground will be one of the notable features of this glad time.

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